

Whose business is it to work for equal access to clean and healthy communities for all?

The movement to protect wilderness areas is at least 100 years older than the one seeking to guarantee equal protection from environmental harm for all communities. To oversimplify, this distinction has been reflected in a stewardship focus in suburbs and an environmental justice (EJ) focus in urban areas.

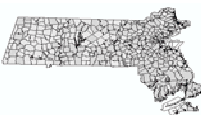
But by many measures, significantly separate suburban and urban versions of working on the environment are in no one's interest. In public health terms, cities have higher rates of environmentally-caused illness, but rates of asthma, learning disabilities and cancers are rising in suburbs. In political terms, decisions that ultimately concentrate hazards in some locales are made regionally, and protection is also a regional responsibility. Ecologically the natural world does not stop at wilderness areas but includes cities and towns and all their inhabitants. In Episcopal belief, we seek to perpetuate the heavenly kingdom on earth Jesus established, where customary boundaries are overcome (among rich and poor, establishment and outcasts, healthy and sick, life and death). In terms of our call as believers, we're to use our hands, hearts and minds in the garden and the marketplace.

The United Church of Christ did one of the earliest studies of the relationship between poverty, race, and sites of hazardous facilities. The Catholic Bishops, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, Coalition for the Environment and Jewish Life and National Council of Churches all have EJ positions. The New England Episcopal Bishops' pastoral letter "To Serve Christ in All Creation" (2/03) says:

The poor, the marginalized, and the least powerful of our human neighbors are those who suffer most from illness and pollution caused by environmental degradation. Generators, incinerators, and waste disposal facilities are concentrated in impoverished neighborhoods; children in our inner cities suffer alarming rates of asthma; overreliance on the use of private vehicles deprives the poor of transportation.

Towns with high environmentally-caused health risks: Do you live in or near one?

Go to http://www.environmentalleague.org/Unequal_Exposure_Report.pdf for a map showing counties in the state carrying the heaviest environmental burdens. According to this report, the 20 most burdened towns (experiencing cumulative effects of hazardous waste, landfills and transfer stations, polluting industrial facilities, power plants, and incinerators) are Boston, Worcester, Downtown Boston, Springfield, Cambridge, New Bedford, Waltham, Lowell, East Boston, Framingham, Brockton, Dorchester, Pittsfield, Lynn, Fall River, Newton, Woburn, Chicopee, Natick and Somerville.



Why focus on race and poverty to find correlations with environmental harm?

The evolution of neighborhoods and industrial districts is multi-faceted. But looking at race and poverty does not imply that the other dynamics don't also operate. Dialog about environmental justice today focuses on the considerable correlation between income, race, and risk, because it directs attention to where policy tools need to be applied to afford equal protection from severe harm to all — and this benefits all. A recent study addresses, for example, significant economic costs to society from health damage suffered in burdened communities: <http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/rp/03-09ChildhoodIllness.PDF>

Increasing the likelihood of doing environmental justice in the Commonwealth

Episcopal City Mission held a brown bag lunch on environmental justice in March. Many denominations work as a coalition to support S. 2219, *An Act Promoting Environmental Justice*, sponsored by State Senators Jarrett Barrios and Diane Wilkerson and State Representative David Sullivan. People from several Episcopal parishes including St Paul's, Dedham; Church of our Savior, Arlington; and Epiphany, Winchester are actively involved.

The bill requires the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to factor in environmental justice as it plans and implements policy. For what is now executive policy to become law, the bill must get out of committee and onto the House floor for approval before the legislature adjourns later this year. Diocesan advocates are working to address the following concerns, despite the fact that the bill has it received support across the State House.

- A compromise version of the bill, reported out of the Joint Committee on Natural Resources in March, had small but significant wording changes. *The new wording would severely limit the reach of any future environmental justice efforts undertaken by the state. It is crucial that these changes be corrected.*
- After Ways and Means determines the legislation's fiscal impact (sponsors anticipate no new costs associated with it), the bill will go to the House floor, where opposition to environmental justice efforts traditionally has been strongest. Communication with representatives about this bill will then be crucial.

Expect notification of a Legislative Day in the spring with a detailed briefing for the public and elected officials at the State House. People in parishes who have been or want to be involved in the effort are encouraged to contact Susan Youmans 781-729-4021.

More Resource Materials on the Environment

How often does seeing a list of titles make you want to keep on reading? Please keep reading here, because the Committee believes resources available at the parish help support parishioners do the work needed to relate environmental justice and stewardship to our faith. And the goal is to serve Christ in all Creation — both the “natural world” and the *human-made world, where people live* (Byron Rushing clarifies the term this way in the video listed below). Consider these resources as offered in the spirit that relatives and friends offer advice to a new parent or godparent, aunt or uncle. “Caring for the earth” is something we all do. Our understanding of what’s most important evolves over the generations. Nobody really *teaches* us how, though we have models. We bring different strengths and weaknesses to it. There are many ways to do a *good enough* job. It *takes a village* (needs help and awareness from all). And although trial and error is inevitable, you hate to fall back on it very often.

A year ago the Committee on Faith and the Environment sent each Dean copies of 2 award-winning videos on grounds care without pesticides. Easter week we sent more resources to Deans or people who were designated to receive them.

What do you need to know about what we are sending? Some of the items are basic—**Greening Congregations**, for example, has readings that help explain what stewarding the environment has to do with our work as Christians, and how to go about it. **Living in Nature**, the video provided this time, is a 30 minute introduction to ways Christianity has viewed the environment. It explores ideas in western Christianity and science that have led to the belief that nature is ours to manipulate, and it shows religious foundations for an alternate view being embraced by theologians today, seeing nature as a web in which we all live.

Other items below are quite specific; we’re sending them as examples of the kinds of things that appeal to people with particular interests. *There’s more to share; ask Committee member Maeve Ward questions & she’ll refer you to the right person.* Copies of each item have been mailed to each Deanery. The Committee also has a limited number of copies to loan and/or can provide ordering information. Contact Maeve at 617-527-5331.

Greening Congregations Handbook: Stories, ideas and resources for cultivating creation awareness and care in your congregation. Tanya Marcovna Barnett, Earth Ministry, Seattle, WA. Spiral bound; 210 pp.

Living in Nature: Religion and science in dialogue on the environment. Rodney Peterson, Barbara Smith-Moran, Susan Youmans, Video; Boston Theological Institute, Newton, MA, 1997. 30 min.

Pesticide Reduction Source Guide: For citizens and municipalities of Massachusetts. Wellesley Natural Resources Commission, Wellesley, MA, 2002. Loose leaf notebook, 99 pp.

Pat Roy Mooney, **The ETC Century: Erosion, technical transformation and corporate concentration in the 21st century**, Development Dialog 1999:1-2. Distributed at UN PrepCon3 for WSSD, 2003. Paperback, 128pp.

The Planet Maintenance and Repair Guide: 25 ways youth groups can tackle environmental threats in the community. Academy for Educational Development, Spiral bound, 2000, 81 pp.

“Proceedings: Impact of Climate change on horticulture: Developing a research and education outreach agenda.” Symposium held in conjunction with the Centennial Conference of the American Society for Horticultural Science, 10/4/03 Providence, RI. Summaries of presentations: 40 double-spaced pp.

Recycled Product Suppliers Directory. MA Buy Recycled Business Alliance, MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Dept of Environmental Protection, Boston, MA, 2000, Available in pdf file on the web: <http://www.nrc-recycle.org/brba/RecycledConstructionProducts.PDF>. Soft cover directory.

Recycling Services Directory. WasteCap of MA, MA EOEa and DEP, Boston, MA, 2001. Available at www.wastecap.org/wastecap/rsd2003/ Soft cover directory.

“Soil Solutions Recipe Book: Organic controls for weeds, insect pests and diseases for your trees shrubs and lawn”. Boston Tree Preservation, Woburn, MA. 15 pp.

“To Serve Christ in All Creation”. Service book, Parish of the Epiphany, Winchester, 7 March 2004.

*Environmental justice: an update. But first why it isn't just the business of city-dwellers

Summer Oracle
People from 6 parishes attended the annual meeting of CERES (the Diocese joined '97). Reports.

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SEE DIOCESAN WEBSITE (Diomass.org) FOR THE PASTORAL LETTER AND THE 4 SESSION CURRICULUM DEVELOPED FOR USE WITH IT. CONTACT ED. FOR PARISHES THAT HAVE USED IT.